



Top News

Sources: Trump speaks to advisers about firing Sessions

Associated Press

Posted July 24, 2017

July 24, 2017

Updated July 24, 2017 9:24pm



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Attorney General Jeff Sessions speaks in Philadelphia. President Donald Trump took a new swipe at Sessions today, referring to him in a tweet as “beleaguered” and wondering why Sessions isn’t digging into Hillary Clinton’s alleged contacts with Russia.

WASHINGTON >> President Donald Trump has spoken with advisers about firing Attorney General Jeff Sessions, as he continues to rage against Sessions’ decision to recuse himself from all matters related to the Russia investigation.

The president's anger again bubbled into public view today as he referred to Sessions in a tweet as "beleaguered." Privately, Trump has speculated aloud to allies in recent days about the potential consequences of firing Sessions, according to three people who have recently spoken to the president. They demanded anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Trump often talks about making staff changes without following through, so those who have spoken with the president cautioned that a change may not be imminent or happen at all. What is clear is that Trump remains furious that the attorney general recused himself from the investigations.

ADVERTISING

"So why aren't the Committees and investigators, and of course our beleaguered A.G., looking into Crooked Hillary's crimes & Russia relations?" Trump tweeted today. His tweet came just hours before his son-in-law, White House senior adviser Jared Kushner, traveled to Capitol Hill to be interviewed about his meetings with Russians.

Trump's intensifying criticism has fueled speculation that Sessions may resign even if Trump opts not to fire him. During an event at the White House, Trump ignored a shouted question about whether Sessions should step down. The attorney general said last week he intended to stay in his post.

If Trump were to fire Sessions, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein would be elevated to the top post on an acting basis. That would leave the president with another attorney general of whom he has been sharply critical in both public and private for his handling of the Russia probe, according to four White House and outside advisers who, like others interviewed, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

It could also raise the specter of Trump asking Rosenstein — or whomever he appoints to fill the position — to fire Robert Mueller, the special counsel leading the investigation into Russia's meddling in the 2016 election and potential collusion with Trump's campaign.

The name of one longtime Trump ally, Rudy Giuliani, was floated today as a possible replacement for Sessions, but a person who recently spoke to the former New York City mayor said that Giuliani had not been approached about the position. Giuliani told CNN today that he did not want the post and would have recused himself had he been in Sessions' position.

The president's tweet about the former Alabama senator comes less than a week after Trump, in a New York Times interview, said that Sessions should never have taken the job as attorney general if he was going to recuse himself. Sessions made that decision after it was revealed that he had met with a top Russian diplomat last year.

Trump has seethed about Sessions' decision for months, viewing it as disloyal — arguably the most grievous offense in the president's mind — and resenting that the attorney general did not give the White House a proper heads-up before making the announcement that he would recuse himself. His fury has been fanned by several close confidants — including his son Donald Trump Jr, who is also ensnared in the Russia probe — who are angry that Sessions made his decision.

Trump and Sessions' conversations in recent weeks have been infrequent. Sessions had recently asked senior White House staff how he might patch up relations with the president but that effort did not go anywhere, according to a person briefed on the conversations. Sessions was in the West Wing today but did not meet with the president, according to deputy press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

Newt Gingrich, a frequent Trump adviser, said that the president, with his criticisms of Sessions, was simply venting and being "honest about his feelings. But that doesn't mean he's going to do anything," Gingrich said. Still, he said the president's comments would have repercussions when it comes to staff morale.

"Anybody who is good at team building would suggest to the president that attacking members of your team rattles the whole team," Gingrich said.

Sessions and Trump used to be close, sharing both a friendship and an ideology. Sessions risked his reputation when he became the first U.S. senator to endorse the celebrity businessman and his early backing gave Trump legitimacy, especially among the hard-line anti-immigration forces that bolstered his candidacy. Several of Sessions' top aides now serve in top administration posts, including Stephen Miller, the architect of several of Trump's signature proposals, including the travel ban and tough immigration policy.

After Trump's public rebuke last week, Sessions seemed determined to keep doing the job he said "goes beyond anything that I would have ever imagined for myself."

"I'm totally confident that we can continue to run this office in an effective way," Sessions said last week.

Armand DeKeyser, who worked closely with Sessions and became his chief of staff in the Senate, said he did not see the attorney general as someone who would easily cave to criticism, even from the president.

"If Jeff thinks he is in an untenable position and cannot be an effective leader, I believe he would leave," DeKeyser said. "But I don't think he's reached that point."

But Anthony Scaramucci, the president's new communications director, said that it's time for Trump and Sessions to hash out a resolution, regardless of what they decide.

"My own personal opinion, I think they've got to have a meeting and have a reconciliation one way or another. You know what I mean? Either stay or go, one way or another," he said.

The Justice Department declined to comment.

 **Get the latest news by email** [Sign Up](#)